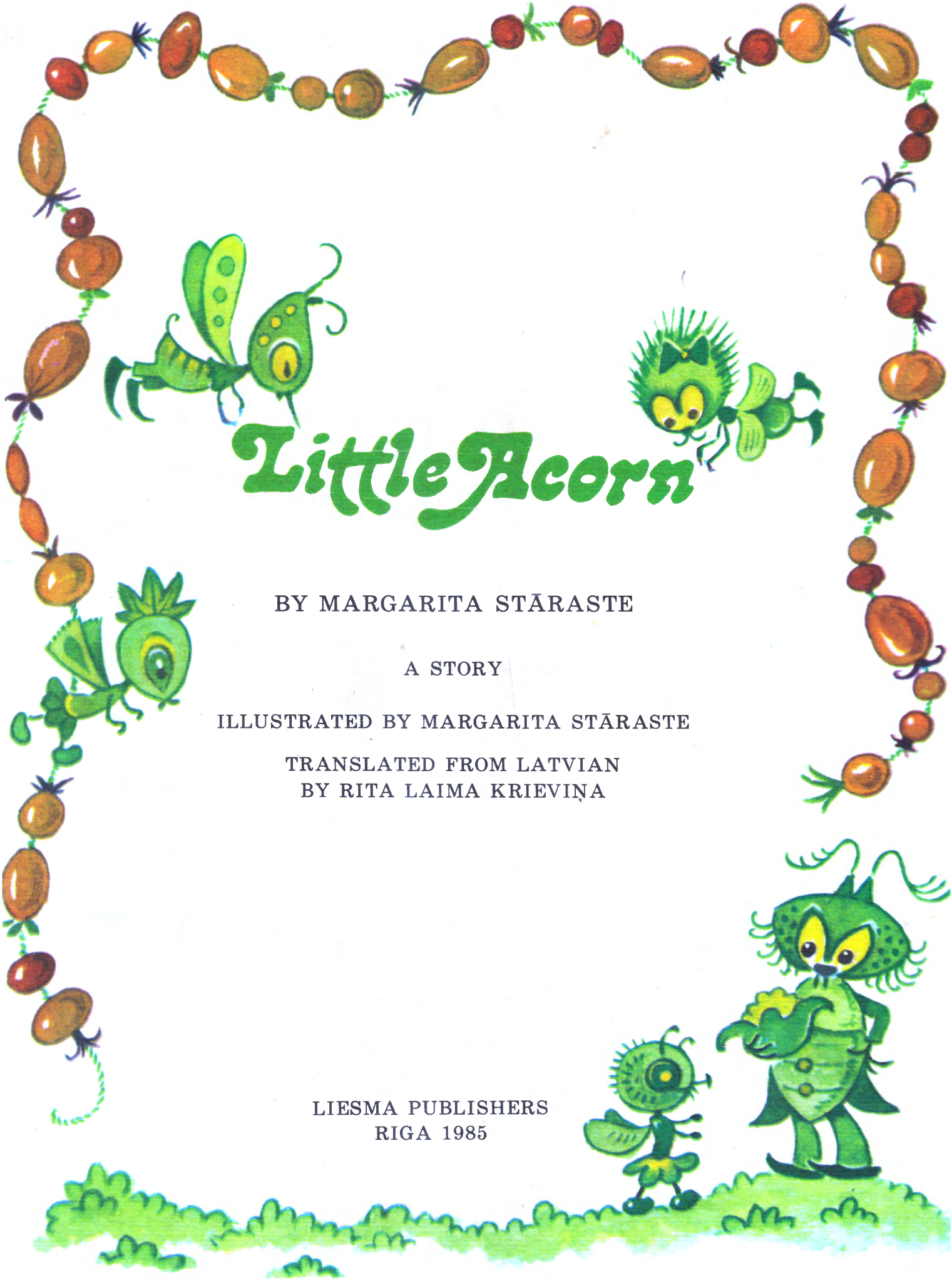
Margarita Stāraste

Little Acorn



Little Acorn

BY MARGARITA STĀRASTE

A STORY

ILLUSTRATED BY MARGARITA STĀRASTE

TRANSLATED FROM LATVIAN
BY RITA LAIMA KRIEVIŅA

LIESMA PUBLISHERS
RIGA 1985

LITTLE ACORN BEGINS TO TODDLE

In the shade of a large oak tree sat a little girl named Maija, who was busy making tiny animals from the acorns.

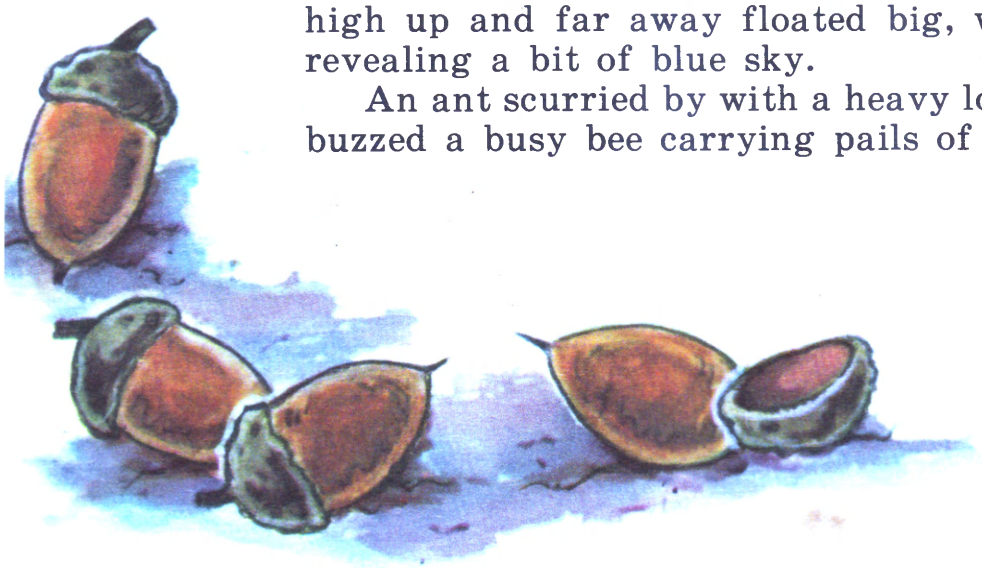
Her nimble fingers had already shaped a puppy with a snub nose, a cat, and a bunny. Next to these sat a funny, little squirrel, its tail made from a blade of green grass, and nearby Maija had placed a piglet and duckling, who were eating from the same trough.

But the nicest of Maija's creations was a little acorn man. His arms were short, his legs stubby, his feet were tucked into tiny clay shoes, and on his head perched a tiny, round cap. The little man stood among the acorn animals with a proud look on his face, and with his tummy thrust out quite boastfully... He had a very good reason to be proud: he had a NAME; Maija had named him Little Acorn.

Soon it was lunchtime. Maija picked up all her new toys and, pressing them close to herself, dashed away across the yard to her house. Bouncing up and down in Maija's hands Little Acorn became curious. He squeezed his head out between Maija's fingers to get a better view and suddenly felt himself falling, falling, falling... Boom! He tumbled into the tall grass. But Maija didn't even notice that. She continued to run and was soon far away.

Little Acorn found himself lying on a leaf. He gazed upwards: slender stems of grass moved gently in the breeze; somewhere high up and far away floated big, white clouds, once in a while revealing a bit of blue sky.

An ant scurried by with a heavy load on her back, and overhead buzzed a busy bee carrying pails of sweet nectar.

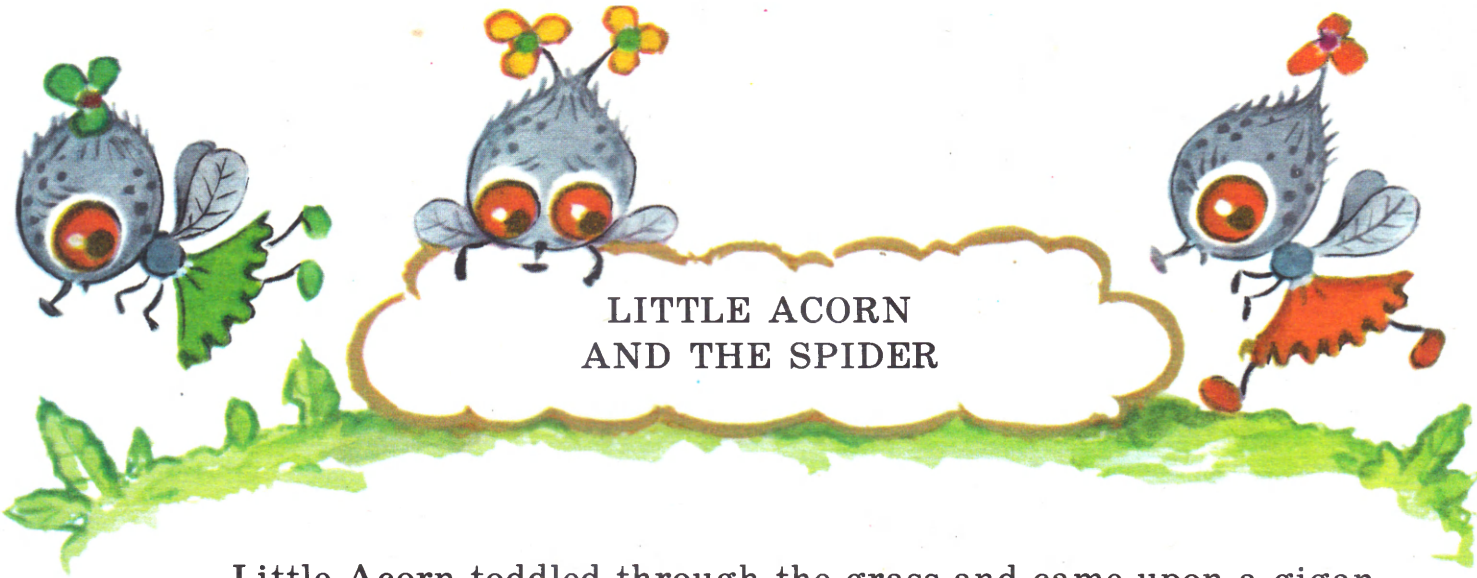


«Bzzz, bzzz!» buzzed the bee with a frown. «Aren't you ashamed to be sleeping during the day? Don't you have work to do?!» And the bee buzzed away over grass and flowers.

«Work? Why, yes! I've got legs, haven't I? I'll have to take a look at what others are doing!» he thought.

Little Acorn stood up and immediately fell down again. His legs were new, and he had never walked before. Teetering and tottering he wobbled but being quite a sturdy little fellow Little Acorn kept at it until he could walk steadily. Away he went — romping in the sun.

Breezes came moving and bending the grass, and it seemed to Little Acorn that the grass was bowing before him out of respect.



LITTLE ACORN AND THE SPIDER

Little Acorn toddled through the grass and came upon a gigantic spider web which blocked his path.

The spider — a grey, chubby fellow — was sitting in the centre of his net keeping each of his eight feet busy spinning silky threads.

«Hey, you! Listen here!» called Little Acorn. «Get your web out of my way!»

«Go around, wise guy!» the spider retorted and continued his work.

But Little Acorn had not the slightest intention of going around. Instead he plunged right through the net, breaking the grey threads.

«Escape, Little Acorn, escape!» whined a blue fly taking off into the sky. «The spider will gobble you up!»

Little Acorn looked up and saw the angry spider racing towards him... Little Acorn took such a fright that he spurted forward without casting a single look back.

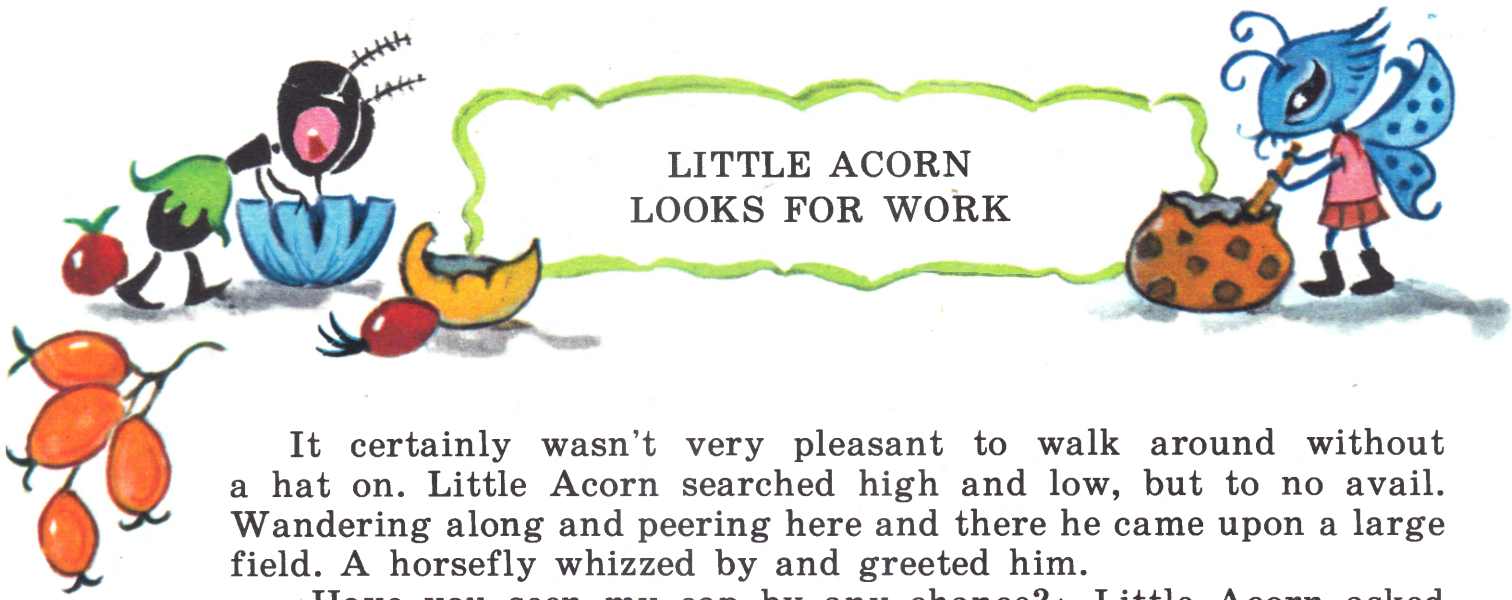
But how can one get anywhere if one's feet are tangled up in a mess of threads?! Little Acorn stumbled and fell, and began rolling down the slope. Suddenly a precipice loomed up ahead. «Oh, no!» yelped Little Acorn and felt the earth and sky begin turning like a merry-go-round. Faster and faster it spun...

Finally — CRACK! — Little Acorn tumbled against a rock and remained lying very still.

Slowly his senses came back to him. He sat up and felt his head, which seemed strangely light. Oh, no! Little Acorn had lost his wonderful cap! What bad luck!

High up on the edge of the precipice sat the spider calmly gazing down at Little Acorn.

«See what a mess you got yourself into!» he sneered and then, gathering together his spool of thread, carefully patched up the holes in his web.



LITTLE ACORN LOOKS FOR WORK

It certainly wasn't very pleasant to walk around without a hat on. Little Acorn searched high and low, but to no avail. Wandering along and peering here and there he came upon a large field. A horsefly whizzed by and greeted him.

«Have you seen my cap by any chance?» Little Acorn asked the horsefly hopefully, but the horsefly shook his head. He didn't even know what a cap was or what it looked like.

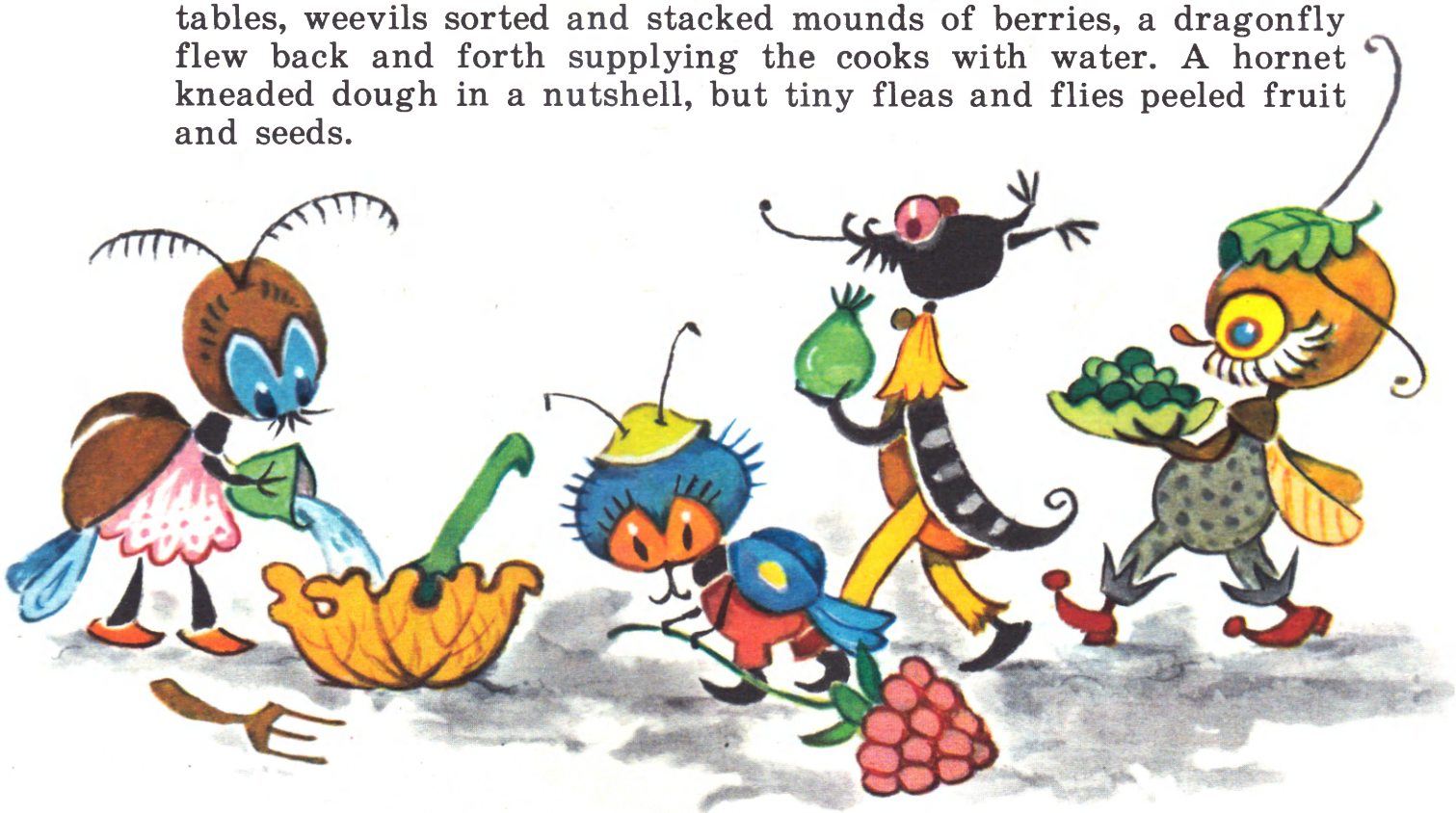
Then Little Acorn spotted a worm.

«Have you seen my cap?» he asked the worm, who retorted, «I don't respect hats!» and wiggled back into the ground.

As he stood there his eye caught sight of quite a commotion going on behind a berry bush — a big crowd of insects was busy doing something and Little Acorn decided to investigate.

The insects were getting ready for a big autumn feast that evening and were speedily finishing one shore after the other. Goodness, there was so much to be done!

A cluster of beetles was making a salad and cleaning vegetables, weevils sorted and stacked mounds of berries, a dragonfly flew back and forth supplying the cooks with water. A hornet kneaded dough in a nutshell, but tiny fleas and flies peeled fruit and seeds.



All seemed merry hustle and bustle, humming, droning, buzzing, and chirping. Little Acorn took a liking to this busy crowd and forgot all about his hat.

«I want to work, too! Me, too!» shouted Little Acorn happily and ran hither and thither looking at what everyone was doing. «Me, too! Me, too!»

Nearby a green beetle diligently mashed vegetables in the shell of a chestnut. Little Acorn stopped and watched the beetle working. «I want to mash! Let me mash!» said Little Acorn eagerly and began jumping up and down in excitement. He grabbed the masher from the green beetle and began to mash. However,

soon he realized, huffing and puffing, that this chore wasn't as easy as it seemed. «This masher is too heavy!» grunted Little Acorn and threw it down in disgust.

A little further he noticed a brown beetle sweeping the dance floor with a blade of grass.

«I want to sweep, too!» cried Little Acorn and seized the broom. «I can sweep better than you!» he boasted, and swish! swash! — the dust flew into Little Acorn's nose and made him sneeze.

«No, I don't like sweeping,» Little Acorn said spitefully and threw away the broom.

«Now, now,» grumbled the brown beetle and picked up his broom. «You've got to learn to sweep slowly. Come here, I'll teach you...»

But Little Acorn didn't want to be taught. Turning his nose up in disdain he skipped on looking for work which might be a bit more pleasant. Frolicking about he was stopped by a black beetle, who had tapped him on the back. «You seem to have nothing to do,» the beetle said. «I'm making a pudding but have run short of pots. On the other side of that hill lives a brown beetle who's got a brand new pot that she could lend me. Could you go fetch it for me?» Go fetch a pot for a pudding? Why, certainly, that Little Acorn could do, and he scurried away gleefully.

LITTLE ACORN DRESSES UP

But hurrying along Little Acorn began pondering, «Why should I waste my time lugging that pot? I'm sure the black beetle will go fetch it himself, and he'll have plenty of time to make his pudding. I'll arrive in time to eat myself full.»

And Little Acorn plopped himself down in the soft white clover. Lying thus and looking up at the sky he came up with a splendid idea — while the others were busy working he could dress himself up marvelously and arrive at the feast and surprise everyone.

«But first of all I have to cover up my bald head with something!» decided Little Acorn and began searching for a becoming flower which could replace his cap. To his dismay he discovered that all the flowers had shed their blossoms, but luckily enough he came upon one late blue-bell which looked quite fresh and nice. He was reaching out his little hand to pluck the blossom when a tiny rust-coloured butterfly poked her head out of the blue-bell and cried, «This is my summer house!»

Little Acorn paid no attention to the butterfly: chasing her away he snatched the blue-bell from its stem and put it on his head.

And now it was time to think up a suitable costume. Little Acorn tipped from place to place looking for something eye-catching. Perhaps that strawberry leaf would do? Maybe that bright yellow birch leaf could be used as a shawl? At last Little Acorn spotted a wind-blown rose petal. «What a splendid coat!» he cried joyfully, jumping up and down in excitement. He wrapped the petal around himself, tied a blade of linen across his belly, and felt extremely satisfied with his appearance.

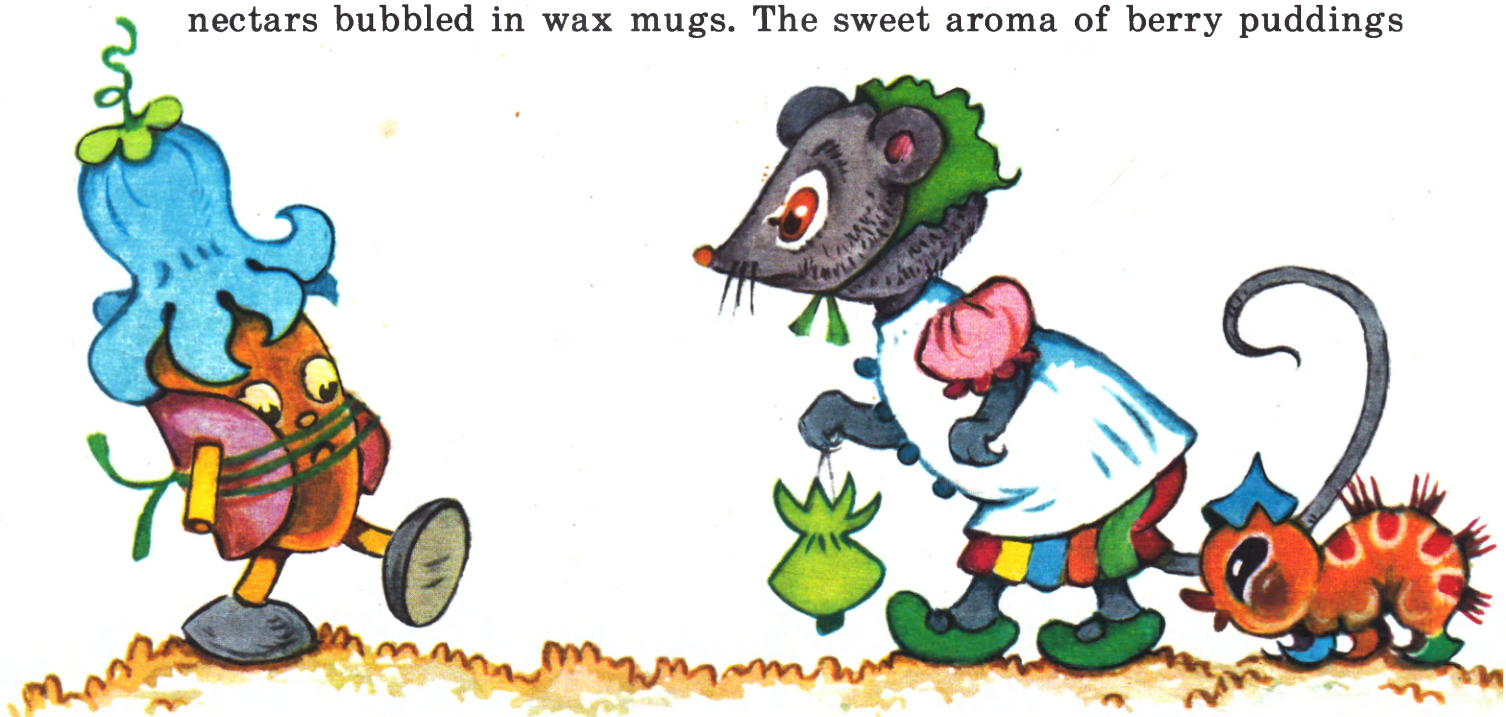
LITTLE ACORN AT THE INSECT FEAST

Little Acorn toddled to the feast feeling extremely proud, his little chest puffed out. A mouse leading a brown caterpillar puppy on a string passed by and politely greeted Little Acorn, but he, overcome by vanity, didn't even bother to look at her or raise his blue-bell hat to return her greeting.

Soon Little Acorn realized that he had lost his way; busily searching for a suitable costume he had wandered off into an unknown direction. Twilight descended darkly, dew sprouted on the tips of grass, but Little Acorn strayed hopelessly. Feeling quite sorry for himself he stopped and peered about dismally, and suddenly the faint sound of music reached his ears: the cheerful notes of the insect orchestra floated over the fields towards Little Acorn. He let out a sigh of relief — the festivities couldn't be far off! The sound of crickets' chirping and grasshoppers' fiddling came closer and closer, and made Little Acorn's heart beat faster.

The feast grounds looked quite wonderful. Fireflies had strung lanterns from stem to stem, and the insects sat at white birch-bark tables munching food and humming melodies. Large and small beetles twiddled their antennas in content, the dragonfly crackled his wings, and lady-birds dashed to and fro carrying plates of food...

Oh, what delicacies and titbits! Thick, rich fruit juices and nectars bubbled in wax mugs. The sweet aroma of berry puddings



drifted from blossom bowls, and juicy vegetable cakes and sizzling fruit hams were brought to tables on green leaf platters.

«The faster I reach these goodies the better!» murmured Little Acorn. But what bad luck! — he had reached a giant puddle lake spotted with islands, and this puddle blocked his path. How to get to the other side?

Little Acorn spotted a slender stem which bent over the water and touched the opposite shore. «A bridge!» he chuckled and without hesitating scrambled up and along the stem... He crawled slowly and carefully, but the stem proved too thin... Little Acorn lost his balance and was hurtled into the puddle with a tremendous splash. His feet sank into the black mud, and with only a great deal of effort did he free himself. He straggled out of the puddle completely covered with mud and could neither see nor speak. Miserably he began waddling in the direction of the music.

The insects, seeing Little Acorn so black and ugly, took a terrible fright and scattered in all directions chirping and squeaking. They imagined him some terrible monster! The musicians abandoned their instruments, the fireflies vanished with their lanterns. Barrels of poppy seeds rolled over in the rush, bowls and plates fell from tables and broke on the ground. Everyone disappeared as fast as their little legs and wings could take them. Little Acorn was left all alone muddy and very unhappy. Not a hint of his elegant costume!

Little Acorn began rubbling himself along buttercup stems and burdock, but to no avail. He was as black as before. He crawled into a thick tansy grove, grumbled and coughed, and then sadly asked a tansy, «Will I have to walk around like this for the rest of my life — ugly and covered with a black crust?!»

But the tansies had fallen asleep; they stood stiff and erect and moved not even a leaf in response.

Little Acorn remained sitting there all night. Towards morning a small rain shower came by and took pity on Little Acorn: the rain washed away his coat of mud, and once again Little Acorn was a handsome fellow!

LITTLE ACORN'S CAP

Smooth and shiny, washed clean by the rain, Little Acorn left the tansy grove and toddled across yesterday's festive grounds.

But what a sight to behold! The white birch-bark tables had toppled over, and their stick legs were bent and broken. The rain had managed to wash away all the sweet berry puddings and tasty vegetable porridges. Empty wax mugs and smashed blossom bowls lay in the moss.

And then Little Acorn spotted the overturned pudding pot. How strange — the pot seemed to remind him of something. He peered closer. Of course! The pot was Little Acorn's lost cap. Truly his own, dear cap — only that a handle had been fastened to it! Little Acorn turned nearly red from anger.

«How could anyone dare do such a thing to my precious cap?!» he growled and poured out the remains of last night's pudding. Little Acorn wanted to pull off the handle, but doing so — CRACK! — the handle flew away and left a big, ugly gap in the cap. Terribly upset Little Acorn tucked the cap under his arm and toddled away.

«What are you so upset about?» grunted a surprised frog seated beneath a huge burdock leaf.

«Take a look at this big, ugly crack!» Little Acorn nearly yelled. «I can't wear this cap, it's no good! The cold rain will splash the back of my head!»

The frog examined the cap. Finally she exclaimed, «This can be patched up in a moment!»

All of the frog's belongings were under the giant leaf. She showed Little Acorn an egg-shell that she used as a tub, and a green jug.

«Ri-dip! Ri-dip! We'll patch up your cap with clay!» the frog said. «Go fetch some water. I'll get the clay. Ri-dip!»

Little Acorn grabbed the jug and hurried to a nearby ditch filled with water. The jug filled up quickly and was so heavy, that Little Acorn lost hold of its handle and it sank out of sight in the ditch's slime. A few bubbles floated up laughing at Little Acorn.

What now?

Little Acorn returned to the leaf, took a quick look at the frog's tub, and decided that it would do. He dragged it back to the ditch, but teetering on the brink of the ditch Little Acorn could not balance the heavy tub. It pulled out of his grasp and began rolling down along the bank. Little Acorn's eyes popped wide open when the tub smashed against a snagged branch and broke into hundreds of white smithereens. But what now?! The frog would soon return only to find that Little Acorn had done away with all of her belongings! What a frightful hassle that would be!

Little Acorn snatched his cap and sneaked away.

LITTLE ACORN AND THE BUMBLE-BEE

In the field's shady grass Little Acorn met a bumble-bee.

«What are you so upset about?» asked the bumble-bee.

Little Acorn showed her his cap. The bumble-bee examined the cap carefully and declared, «We can patch up this crack with wax. I have to make a quick trip to two autumn flowers, but in the meantime you can knead the wax in this trough.»

The bumble-bee buzzed away, but Little Acorn began kneading the wax and looking about him.

The bumble-bee had gathered together many tall jugs from which rose a sweet fragrance, and had left a strange, yellow sack on the ground. What could be in it? Little Acorn had to take a look!

He forgot about his cap and the wax and impatiently untied the sack's string. The sack sprung open and a tremendous cloud of yellow pollen burst out. The air filled with the shimmering pollen, which settled on Little Acorn's head, crept into his eyes, and filled his nose. Sneezing and snorting Little Acorn stumbled against the tallest jug and knocked it over. The jug fell on top of smaller jugs toppling those as well. Honey from the jugs poured on top of Little Acorn, who hardly staggered out of the gluey mess completely sticky.

Little Acorn realized that things had come to no good. The bumble-bee would soon be back and would certainly be horrified at what Little Acorn had done!

Little Acorn grabbed his cap and fled as fast as he could.

LITTLE ACORN IN BLOOM TOWN

Little Acorn had forgotten all about his cracked cap. Unhappy and dazed he stumbled across the field covered with honey and dust.

Soon Little Acorn was too tired to go any further. He collapsed near a dandelion clump and fell fast asleep. His sleep was so deep that he didn't realize what was happening around him: a large crowd of ants had gathered by Little Acorn and were busy examining him and speaking amongst themselves.

«Why, he's been dipped in honey!» suddenly exclaimed one of the ants, and in a moment the entire crowd had licked Little Acorn clean. Not a spot of honey was to be found on him!

The ants' chit-chat finally woke Little Acorn up. He looked at the ants in surprise, rubbing his sleepy eyes, and asked, «Who are you?»

«We are ants and we live in Bloom Town,» the ants replied.

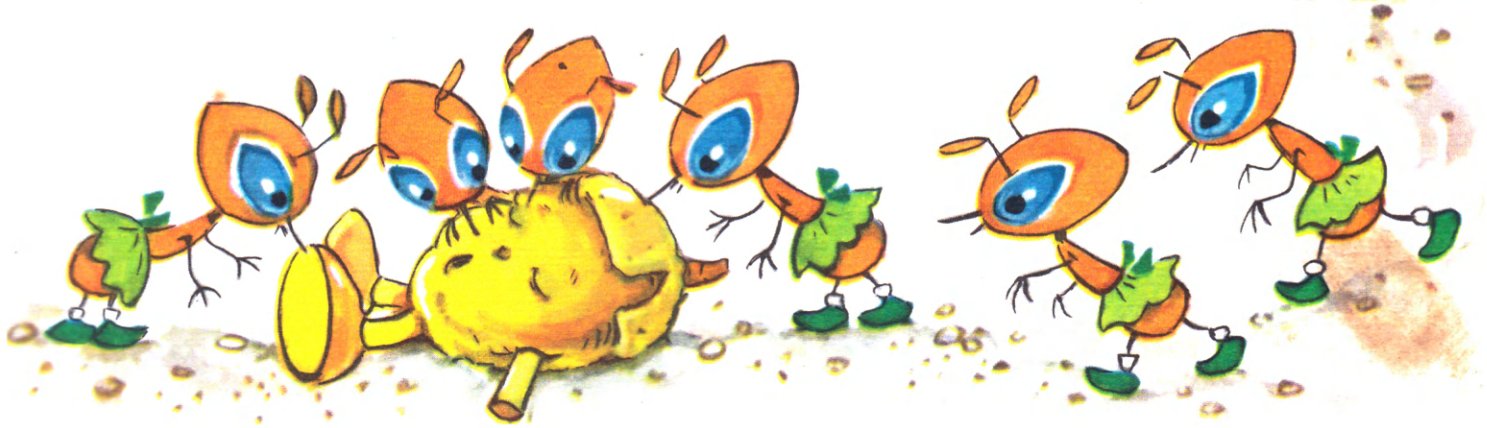
«Bloom Town? What's that? I want to see Bloom Town! Take me to Bloom Town!» Little Acorn demanded jumping up.

And the ants led Little Acorn back to where they had come from.

Bloom Town was a pretty clearing encircled by a tightly woven grass fence. The clearing was dotted with many types of dwellings meant for many types of little creatures: winged creatures, soft and furry creatures, jointed creatures.

«Please be a guest in our house!» the ants said to Little Acorn kindly and led him into their dwelling made of many bits and crumbs. Through a long, narrow corridor that smelled of fresh pine they came into a large room.

Brown leaf carpets covered the room's floor, and the ceiling was supported by long, dry stems of heather. Little Acorn



carelessly scraped his shoes along the pretty carpet and tugged at the walls made of bark.

«No!» he declared haughtily. «I don't like your house!»

And without a word of farewell Little Acorn toddled out leaving the ants standing with surprised and hurt looks on their faces. They hadn't expected such an impolite guest!

Coming out of the ants' home Little Acorn decided to stroll through Bloom Town and take a look at the other houses. He passed by a tiny, spotted lady-bird who suddenly waved to him. She, like the ants, happened to be extremely kind. Gently taking Little Acorn by the hand she invited him into cosy home under a veined leaf.

«This is my new home!» declared the lady-bird and began hastily searching for her white petal tablecloth in order to treat her guest as one should.

However, Little Acorn took a brief look around and said to the lady-bird with contempt, «Your new house is nothing to brag about! In fact I find it quite unpleasant and ugly! The wind blows in from all sides!»

The poor lady-bird felt extremely offended.

«If you don't like it here then please leave,» she said. Little Acorn didn't hesitate to turn his back on her and crawl out into the open.

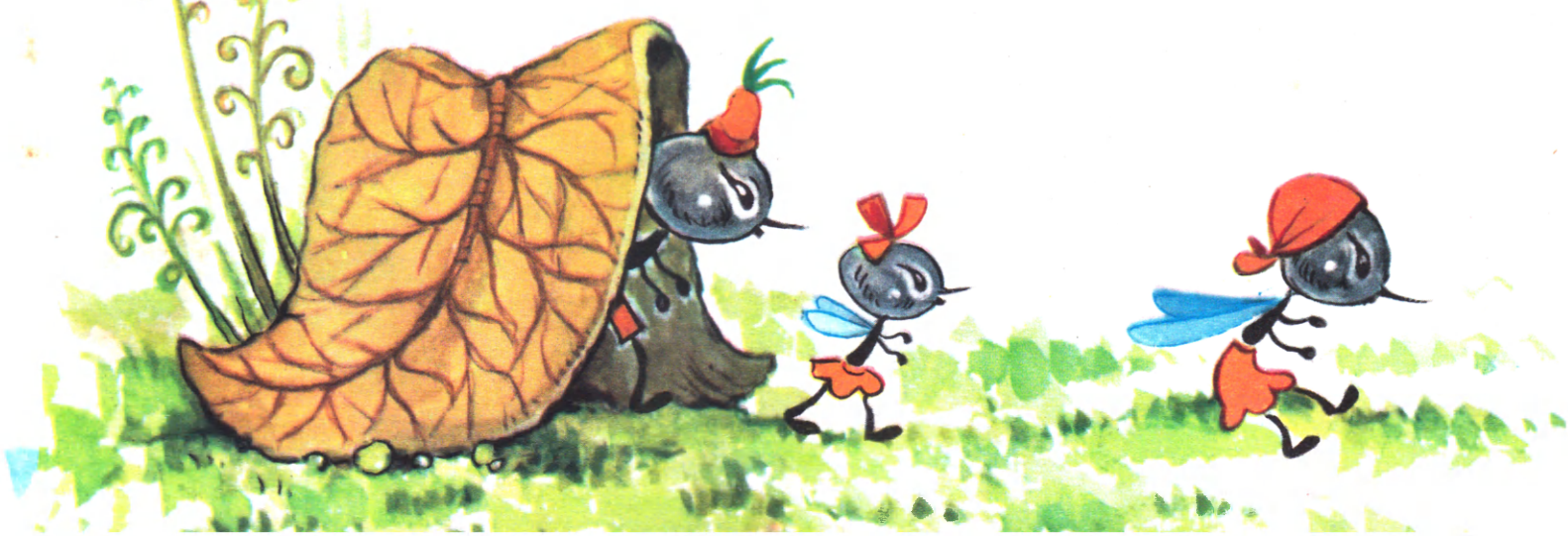
Little Acorn strolled along with an extremely arrogant look on his face. He cast a disdainful look at a flea-beetle living in an empty poppy head. He passed by a snail resting in his shell, and didn't even bother to take a look at a small caterpillar who had found a home on the very tip of a buckwheat stem.

Little Acorn exclaimed scornfully, «Are these HOUSES? Ha! Sooner shacks and caves! How could anyone possibly live in them?!»

The flea-beetle, overhearing this cruel remark, replied angrily, «Well, then Mr. Know-All, build yourself a better home!»

«I will! I will!» retorted Little Acorn proudly. «I'll build a house so beautiful that your eyes will pop out!»

«Don't brag, little fellow. First build your house and then we'll see!» called a grey mouse from her window and vanished, and the others left Little Acorn standing by himself.



LITTLE ACORN'S HOUSE

Little Acorn pulled his cap on tightly and went to work.

He broke off several stems which could serve as logs, rolled over some pebbles, and began heaping them one on top of the other and side by side. To his dismay nothing managed to hold together. Little Acorn lost his temper and hurled away the logs in disgust, and gave a pebble a mighty kick. Why even try?! — he thought.

Rain began pattering from the grey sky. Evening had arrived, but no one thought to invite Little Acorn inside.

Shivering and grumbling, feeling peevish and sorry for himself, Little Acorn wrapped himself up in a leaf and dozed off.

That night a large mushroom pushed its way out of the moist earth and quickly sprouted upwards. When Little Acorn opened his eyes in the morning he found a roof over his head.

«Well, look at that!» he cried happily. «My house is ready!»

Little Acorn jumped up and quickly scraped out a hollow in the mushroom, and crept inside. Having comfortably seated himself he began singing and yelling loudly in order to wake up Bloom Town's inhabitants:

«La-la-la! Tra-la-la!
My house is like a dream —
Beautiful, cosy, and clean!
La-la-la. Tra-la-la!»

Soon enough a crowd of curious ants arrived to take a look and were followed by the shiny flea-beetle, a sluggish mole, the grey mouse, and many others.

«Take a good look at my magnificent house!» boasted Little Acorn loudly.

And everyone was truly amazed, for nobody in Bloom Town had ever seen a mushroom before.

«You are a truly wonderful carpenter! Such a beautiful house! White walls and a red roof!» exclaimed the ants in awe.

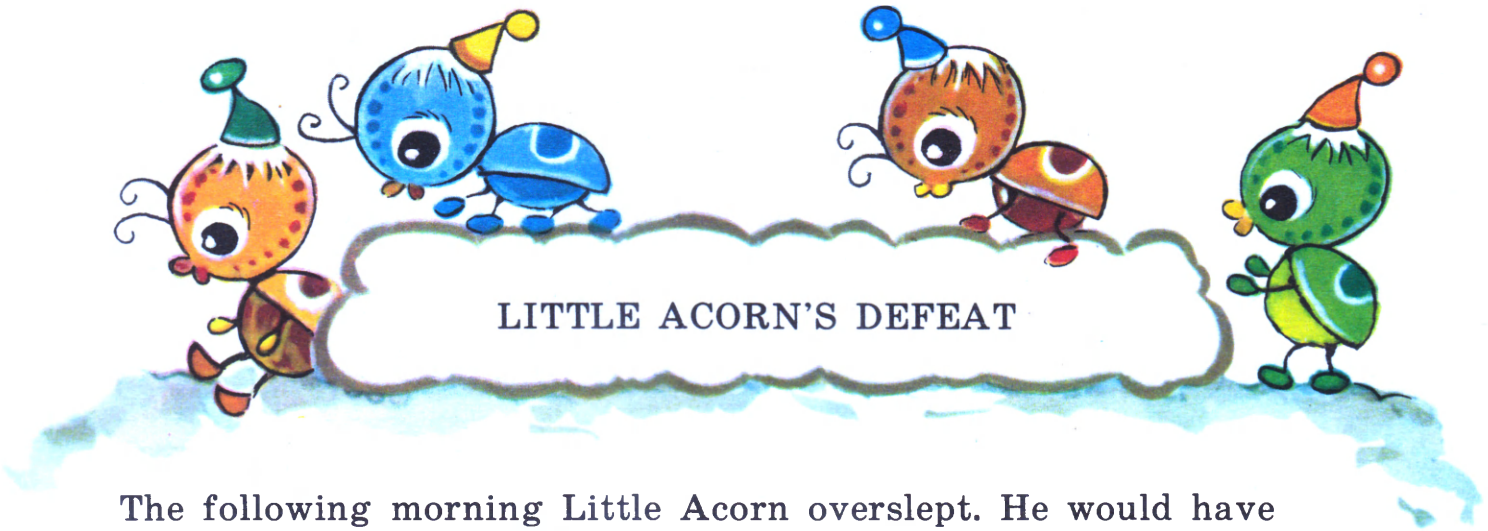
«Yes,» agreed Little Acorn. «Only I know how to paint like that!»

The hubbub and excitement near Little Acorn's house continued all day long. The weevil carefully inspected the white walls with his long nose, and the dragonfly sat on the roof.

Little Acorn strutted around his mushroom with his arms crossed proudly on his puffed-out chest. He felt like a champion!

Only towards evening did the curious crowd disperse, and the last to leave was the snail.

Little Acorn felt happy and tired. He crept into his beautiful house, took off his cap, and fell fast asleep.



LITTLE ACORN'S DEFEAT

The following morning Little Acorn overslept. He would have slept even longer had the sound of laughter not woken him up.

Who could that be? — he wondered sleepily and scrambled out of his mushroom to take a look.

Right in front of him stood a large crowd, the mole, dragonfly, flea-beetle, mouse, and ants included. Even the snail had inched his way over, and a worm had poked her head out of the ground.

Everyone seemed to be pointing at Little Acorn's house, and they were laughing so hard that they had to hold their tummies. Even the grass swayed in great mirth.

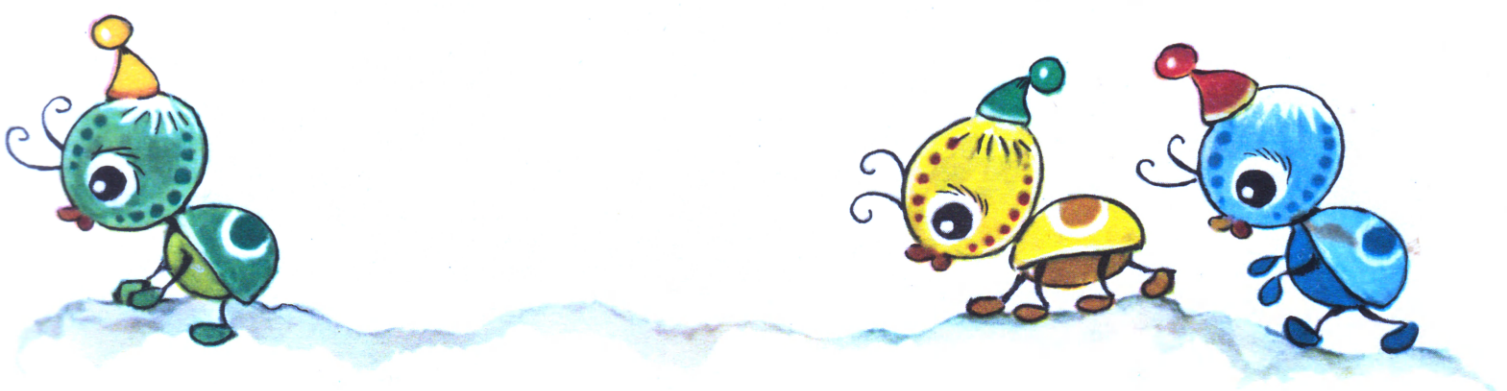
Little Acorn turned around and gasped: what on earth had happened? What had become of his beautiful home?

His once-lovely mushroom looked quite ill. It leaned sadly to one side, its roof had shriveled, and its white walls were now grey and soggy.

«Ha! Ha! Ha! Your mansion seems to have undergone a change!» tittered the dragonfly and crackled his wings.

«Ha, ha, ha! Come and see —
The lovely house has begun to lean.
Nothing left to brag about!
Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!» the others joked.

For a moment Little Acorn was completely stunned and didn't know what to do. But then he began bustling in order to save his home: huffing and puffing he dragged over stems of sorrel and timothy grass, with which he propped up the mushroom as best as he could. Little Acorn tried not to hear the laughs and jokes



around him. Having done all that could possibly be done he crept back inside and didn't appear anymore.

But the next morning, when dew still glittered on every tip of Bloom Town, a thin voice was heard screaming and moaning, «Oh, oh, oh! Ah, ah, ah! Help! Help! Help!»

Everyone recognized the voice which belonged to Little Acorn.

Several fat beetles whirred over in excitement, the ants and grey mouse hurried as fast as they could, as did the dragonfly and mole. All gathered round Little Acorn's dwelling.

What was up? Little Acorn's mushroom had collapsed completely, but Little Acorn lay under the mess whimpering in despair.

The mole quickly grabbed a shovel and went to work digging away the mushroom's remains, which everyone helped scrape up and drag away.

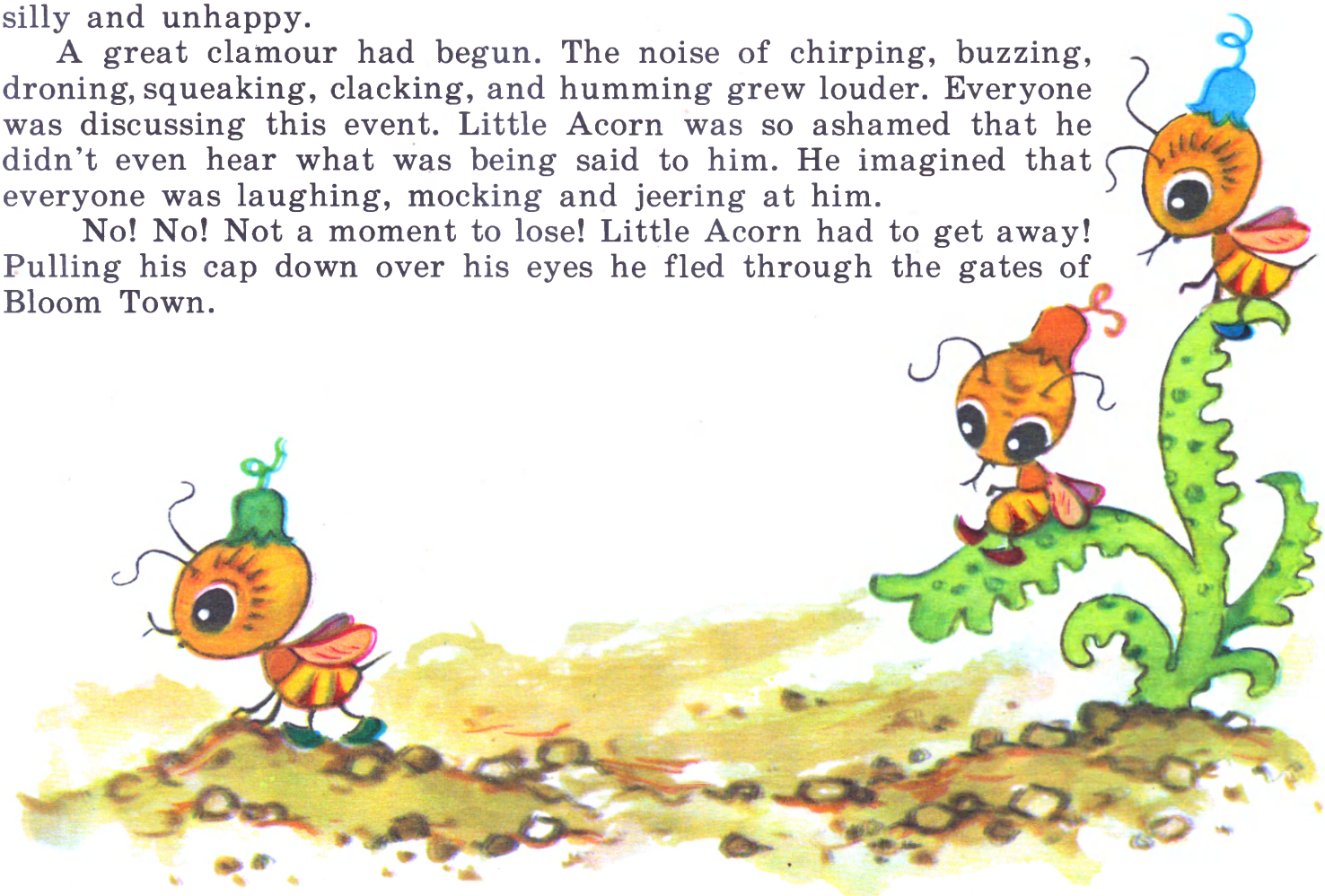
Finally, with great difficulty Little Acorn crawled out from the ruins of his house.

«Well,» said the mole putting away the shovel, «This time we rescued you. But next time build a better house. Each job must be done well!»

What could Little Acorn possibly say in return? He hadn't even built his house — it had appeared out of nowhere! He felt silly and unhappy.

A great clamour had begun. The noise of chirping, buzzing, droning, squeaking, clacking, and humming grew louder. Everyone was discussing this event. Little Acorn was so ashamed that he didn't even hear what was being said to him. He imagined that everyone was laughing, mocking and jeering at him.

No! No! Not a moment to lose! Little Acorn had to get away! Pulling his cap down over his eyes he fled through the gates of Bloom Town.



LITTLE ACORN'S RAFT

«The further from Bloom Town the better!» muttered Little Acorn running as fast as his little legs could carry him.

Finally, completely out of breath he came upon a brook. On either side of it grew reeds and irises, and the water sang merrily tumbling over rocks and stones.

Little Acorn made his way down to the very edge of the water and watched petals and leaves drift by.

«I must get away! The further the better!» thought Little Acorn. «Everyone here likes to make fun of me!»

He spied a smooth strip of bark partly stranded on the bank, and making a hasty search Little Acorn found part of a broken reed which could be used as an oar. Clutching it tightly he scrambled up on the bark and pushed away from the shore. «Away! Away!» he cried gleefully.

Mildly rocking the raft floated by rushes and cattails and drifted into the current, carrying Little Acorn past rocks peeping out of the water, past clumps of hissing reeds, and through the sun's gold shimmering on the water.

But soon the current became stronger. Bubbling and swirling it rolled over rocks, driving the tiny raft faster and faster, and suddenly pulled the oar out of Little Acorn's grasp.

Little Acorn fearfully grabbed hold of the raft's edge and held on as best as he could.

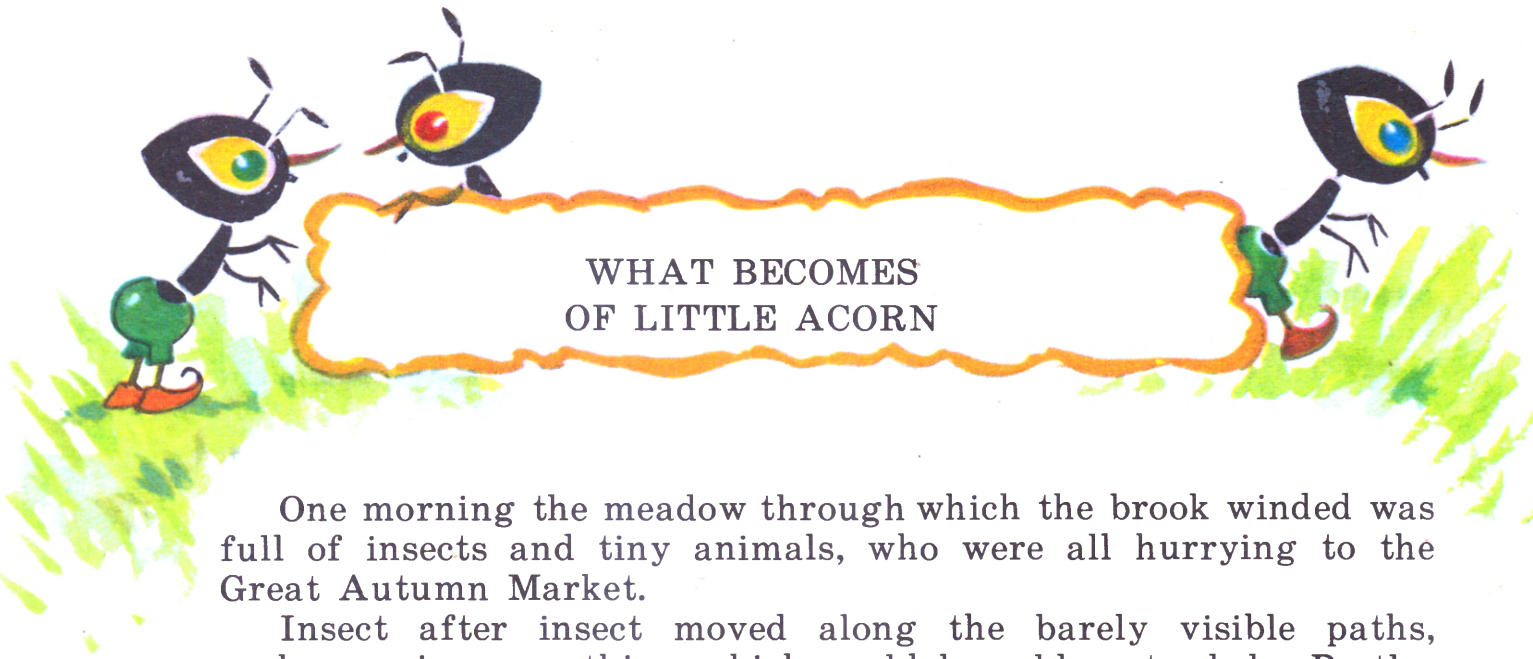
But then — white, whirling hands of foam grabbed the raft and Little Acorn and pulled them into a thundering waterfall...

Only a good while later did the current cast Little Acorn on to the dry bank, but the raft had disappeared. Oh, but what had happened to Little Acorn?

He was no longer the same handsome, little man of before! His arms were broken, his sides torn open, his tiny feet had snapped off and washed away with his shoes. And his cap lay on the opposite bank split into two.

Little Acorn could no longer move. He remained lying still for a very, very long time...

Next to him grew a stem of cotton-grass which from time to time bent down and kindly stroked Little Acorn's battered sides.



WHAT BECOMES OF LITTLE ACORN

One morning the meadow through which the brook winded was full of insects and tiny animals, who were all hurrying to the Great Autumn Market.

Insect after insect moved along the barely visible paths, each carrying something which could be sold or traded. Beetles wobbled along with bins of seeds on their backs. The mole lugged a sack full of vegetables. The mouse pulled an ear of rye along the ground, but the tiniest bugs tottered by carrying wee little baskets shaped from shells of grain. Today the market was the only place to be!

The grey spider was also on his way to the market toting his spools of thread. He had come a very long way, and all of his eight feet were so tired that he decided to stop and rest by a stem of cotton-grass, which grew not far from the path. But what's this? Someone had already taken his place and had fallen fast asleep. The spider sat down and stared.

A short while later the frog happened to hop by clutching a folded sheet made from a big, round leaf, and, seeing the spider, hopped over to chat with him.

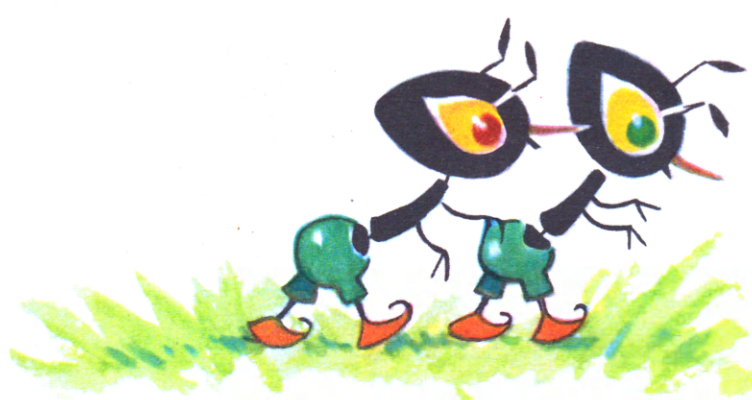
The bumble-bee buzzing by descended to take a look — what were those two looking at with such big eyes?

«Why, that's Little Acorn!» she suddenly cried, recognizing the little acorn man, who lay beneath the cotton-grass.

«Yes, truly indeed,» echoed the spider and frog.

But poor Little Acorn was so weak that he couldn't even open his mouth to say something in return.

Seeing him so ill and helpless the frog, spider, and bumble-bee set their wares down in the grass... The market could wait!



«We'll help you!» they promised and went to work. The spider wound together all of his threads to make them stronger and sewed up the terrible split in Little Acorn's side. The frog attached new straw arms and legs to his round acorn body, and made a new pair of shoes from clay. The bumble-bee flew to the other side of the brook and gathered together the bits and pieces of Little Acorn's cap, which she glued together with wax. Now his cap was as good as new!

By this time quite a number of curious onlookers had gathered nearby — a green lizard, a firefly, blue flies. Mosquitoes and midges settled on the tip of the cotton-grass, rocking it to and fro.

Most of Bloom Town's inhabitants had by now heard the news that Little Acorn had been found lying in quite a sorry state, and they hurried as fast as they could to help.

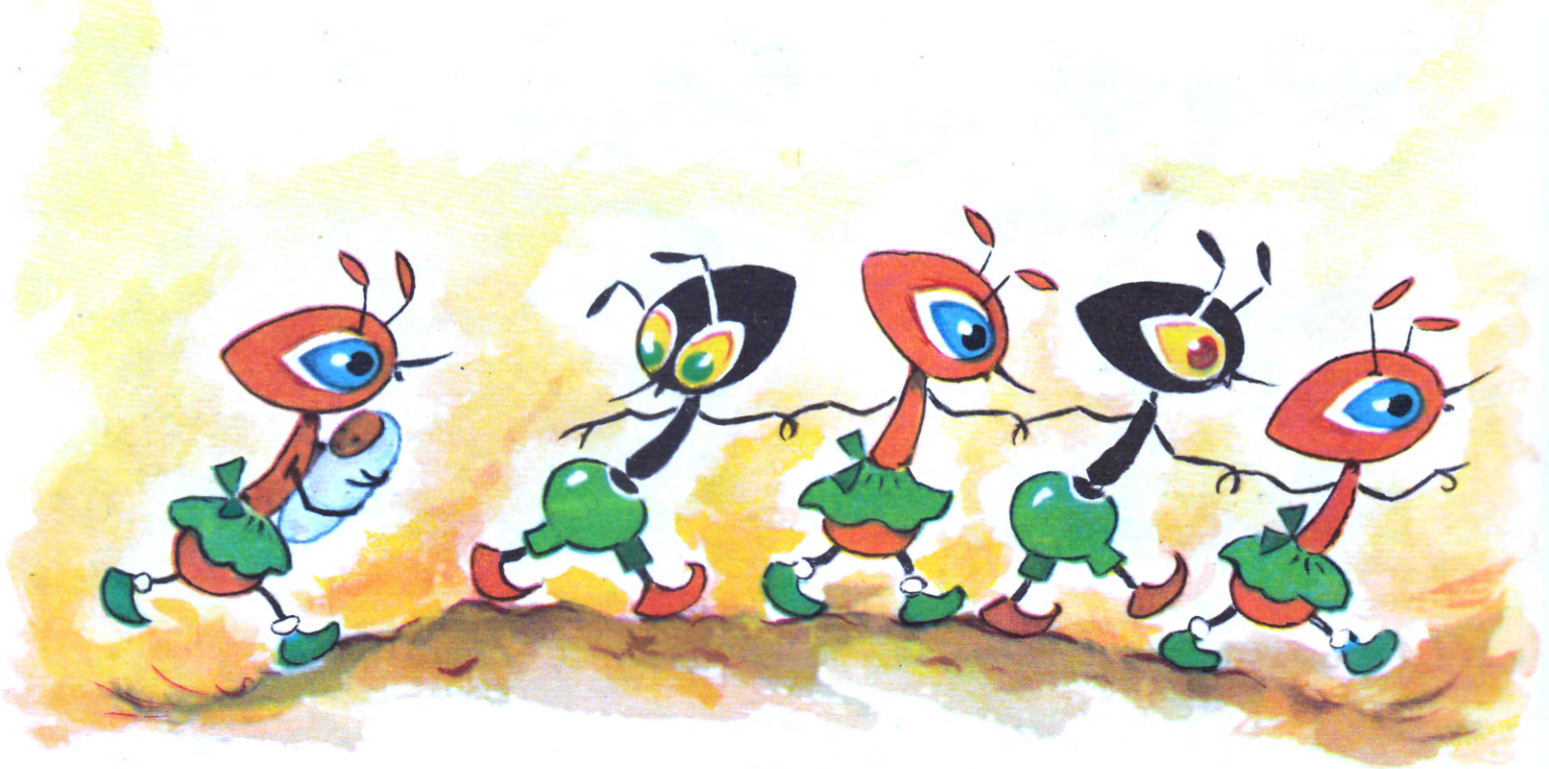
Chirring, humming, buzzing, peeping, and twittering they bustled around Little Acorn.

«Come back to Bloom Town!» said the dragonfly to Little Acorn, crackling his wings.

«Yes! Yes! Do come!» the others immediately cried.

Little Acorn felt tears of joy in his eyes, and he could barely utter a sound... How terribly kind and good they were! He had hardly stood up on his new feet when butterflies and beetles happily took him by each hand and led him back to Bloom Town.

And here this story ends. Little Acorn still lives in Bloom Town with his many friends, but he has changed quite a bit. But then — that's a completely different story!



Bloom Town

Margarita Stāraste

ZIĻUKS

Rīga «Liesma» 1982

© Ilustrācijas, «Liesma» 1982
© Translation into English
«Liesma» 1985

Printed in the USSR